

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 7, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

As Congress begins its consideration of the Farm Bill, we urge you to provide sufficient resources for a well-funded rural development title in order to create real opportunity for economically distressed rural communities.

The small towns in rural America are some of our nation's great treasures. As Members of Congress representing rural areas, we know the importance of these communities and keeping them healthy is one of our highest priorities in Congress. The need for a strong focus on rural America is even more apparent as we hear from small businesses, independent farms, and family-run operations all across the country that are struggling to make ends meet.

Past Farm Bills have not provided the funding that is required to address the challenges that confront rural America. The 2007 Farm Bill presents the opportunity for us to set a new course.

There is a very real need for a renewed commitment to rural America: 90 percent of the nation's lowest income counties are located in rural America; since 2001, poverty rates among children in rural areas have gone up in nearly every state.

Yet, despite the social and economic challenges that rural communities face, the federal investment in addressing these challenges is inadequate. Since enactment of the 2002 Farm Bill, 90 percent of mandatory rural development funds have been eliminated. As a result, most rural development initiatives authorized in the last Farm Bill were never started, or were implemented at drastically reduced levels.

Farm programs alone do not adequately address these needs. Even in counties that are predominantly agricultural, most residents are not involved in production agriculture. The next Farm Bill should contain an innovative rural development title that helps them revitalize rural America.

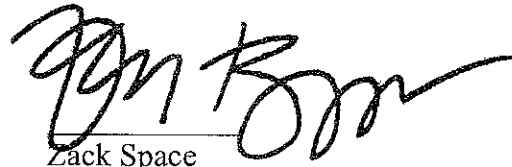
Madam Speaker, this Farm Bill gives our Party the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to rural America. We urge you to take advantage of this chance to do so.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue and for your consideration

Sincerely,



Tim Walz
Member of Congress



Zack Space
Member of Congress



Baron Hill
Member of Congress



Ciro Rodriguez
Member of Congress



Nancy Boyda
Member of Congress